



MASTER FILE

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DSSD CENSUS 2000 PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM SERIES# N-4

MEMORANDUM FOR

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Attention:

Management Training Branch
Field Division

From:

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Prepared By:

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Subject:

Observation of Update/Leave and Urban Update/Leave
Enumeration Procedures in Southwestern Louisiana

Introduction

On March 20 and 21, I observed Update/Leave and Urban Update/Leave enumeration procedures for Census 2000 in Southwestern Louisiana. In addition to observing the enumeration procedures, I visited the Opelousas LCO. Observing the field operations and discussing the procedures with some Field Operations Supervisors (FOS), crew leaders, and enumerators provided me with a feel for the difficulties of the operation in this area.

March 20, 2000

On the first day, I began the morning with a tour of the office. Since the building was shared with non-census offices, the census areas were highly secured. The activity level at the office was extremely high and it seemed to be functioning efficiently. Communication between supervisors and staff appeared good and the employees morale was encouraging. While at the office, I observed an Assignment Area (AA) binder being checked in and edited. The binder failed the edit, but for minor reasons that were easily correctable. The editor pointed out that the office uses a separate sheet for describing the errors in detail along with the checklist in the binder. It allows them to be more specific about what needs to be fixed. She also pointed out that most binders need little or no correcting.

Later in the morning, I accompanied an FOS to a location where a crew leader and an enumerator were discussing a problem they encountered in an Update/Leave area. The problem was that the enumerator was delivering questionnaires to housing units on a street, but the residents were telling her that they had already received questionnaires. One woman showed the enumerator the previously delivered questionnaire and the address was exactly the same, but the name of the town and the Zip Code was different. It appears that these units had two separate listings and got assigned to two different AAs, but were indeed the same units. The FOS and crew leader decided it was best to talk with the local post offices to verify the addresses for these units.

During the afternoon, I traveled with a crew leader while she did some dependent checks for Urban Update/Leave areas. We did three, all of which passed. One difficulty the crew leader had was that many of the housing units did not have visible house numbers on the unit or on a mailbox. In these instances, the crew leader could not verify that the listed address was accurate, she could only verify that the unit existed in that location. During one of the checks, the crew leader pointed out a housing unit that would not accept their questionnaire unless the enumerator would take it out of the envelope and show what it contained. The enumerator thought this was inappropriate and did not deliver the questionnaire.

March 21, 2000

On the second day, I went out with a crew leader and an enumerator to observe Update/Leave enumeration. We went to a total of 17 housing units. Whenever contact was made, the enumerator identified himself, verified the address and name, made corrections if necessary, got the phone number, delivered the form, pointed out the 1-800 number for help, and questioned whether there were any other living quarters on the property. The enumerator was very friendly and professional and the respondents were very receptive to him. The enumerator made contact at ten of the 17 housing units. One unit had a loose dog in a fenced in front yard, so the enumerator verified the address from the mailbox and hung the questionnaire on the gate. One unit had a snake laying on the walkway, which the enumerator was able to avoid after being startled. Two long forms and 15 short forms were delivered. No units were added to the list.

In the afternoon, I accompanied a crew leader and assistant crew leader on some update/leave dependent checks, all of which passed. One of the dependent checks was in a very rural area that contains many seasonal hunting camps. There were over 40 maps for this AA, much of it being alligator infested water. About 75 percent of the questionnaires that the enumerator had left were still hanging on the doors. The crew leader explained to me that there are areas in this vicinity that are accessible only by boat. However, due to the recent drought, there is an insufficient amount of water for boats to safely travel, thus they have not been able to visit these areas. They were hoping for the water to rise soon so that they could get to these areas.

Summary

From my observations and my conversations with the field staff, most respondents are very receptive and cooperative, although I heard stories about some hostile encounters. Southwestern Louisiana poses some unusual difficulties in conducting the enumeration, such as alligators and snakes, as well as some common ones, like untied dogs and uncooperative respondents. However, despite these obstacles, the staff appears very efficient and committed to carrying out the operations as quickly and as accurately as possible.

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